

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I am a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life. I am disappointed by the continued lack of informative television programming. Make time available and affordable for perspective beyond the corporate interests. PLEASE.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. The town meetings in our small city are televised and give an opportunity for us to see and hear many sides of each issue, as mundane as many of them may be. I treasure that public TV access. Often it is the best thing on TV for the evening!

More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

donna bessken
506 washington st nw
Hartselle, AL 356402234